

JACK ANDERSON

The Washington Merry-go-round

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Secret report to air findings on CIA-mafia plot vs. Castro



WASHINGTON — Involvement of the Mafia and Cuban Premier Fidel Castro in the assassination of President John F. Kennedy has been given a new and intriguing twist in the still unreleased report of the House Assassinations Committee.

We broke the first version of the "Cuban connection" in 1967, as it was told us by the late mobster John Roselli. While the committee doesn't buy his story in its entirety our reports sparked an investigation that led to a variation of the Roselli theory as one of the possible scenarios of the Dallas assassination.

Roselli told us that Mafia hirelings, with the blessing of the Central Intelligence Agency, were sent to Cuba to kill Castro. The dictator had earned the mob's enmity by cutting off their lucrative gambling and other interests in Cuba. The would-be assassins were captured by Castro, Roselli told us, "turned around" under torture and persuaded to direct their murderous efforts toward Kennedy.

The assassinations committee's version gives a more plausible motivation for the mob's involvement — that the Mafia, like Castro, had its own reasons for wanting to kill Kennedy. The alliance, if there was one, was voluntary.

The committee doubts Roselli's story of a forced turnaround by the Mafia hit men after torture. "The committee found it more difficult to dismiss the possibility that the Mafia, although not turned around by Castro, might have voluntarily turned around with him," the report states.

The committee notes that, by 1963, the mob "may have lost their motivation to assassinate Castro" because the growing Soviet presence in Cuba made it unlikely that he would be overthrown and the country reopened to Mafia operations.

On the other hand, the committee

report says, the mob "had been given sufficient reason to eliminate President Kennedy." By 1962, both Castro and the Mafia were hurting financially, "chiefly as a result of pressures applied to each by the Kennedy administration," the report notes. It adds: "Thus, they had a common motive that made an alliance more attractive than mutual animosity."

The longstanding animosity between Castro and the mob would have been no obstacle to collaboration against a common enemy, the report notes. "Mafia figures are rational, pragmatic 'businessmen' who often realign their associations and form partnerships with ex-enemies when it is expedient."

The evidence gathered by the committee indicates that the Cuban-Mafia conspirators "could have considered using the resources at their disposal to increase their power and alleviate their problems by assassinating President Kennedy."

Muddying the waters even more is the possibility that anti-Castro Cubans may have been involved. "Many of them," the report says, "had come to conclude that the U.S. president was an obstacle requiring elimination even more urgently than the Cuban dictator."

Why does the committee discount Roselli's version of the Castro-Mafia alliance? "The committee considered it significant that Roselli's public revelations about the plot corresponded with his efforts to avoid deportation in 1966 and 1971 and to escape prosecution for illegal gambling activities in 1967." Roselli, the committee suggests, may have hoped to get CIA intervention in his legal difficulties "as a price for his agreeing to make no further disclosures."

Ironically, while the committee didn't buy Roselli's story, "it was his death that really pushed the committee" to study Mafia possibility in depth and

come up with the alternate theory, a source told our associate Tony Capaccio.

The committee report stresses that the Cuban-Mafia connection is still only a theory without hard evidence. The committee "was frustrated by its inability to determine details of activities that might have led to the assassination — identification of participants, associations and timing of events."

A BREAK FOR BANKS: Many of the nation's charities are unwittingly donating money to recipients who need it the least — the banks.

Proof of this is easily available to anyone who has sent a check to a favorite charity. Just look at the canceled check and note the date it was written and the date it was cashed. The difference constitutes the number of days your bank had free use of the money you donated.

Time in the mails is beyond the charities' control, of course, and would be relatively insignificant anyway. But some charities inexplicably wait weeks before they deposit contributions, thus losing interest they should be collecting.

Our random sampling showed that the fastest charity depositor was the Prison Fellowship, a Christian mission to aid convicts. A donation was on its way to the bank the same day it was received.

Others, including the Disabled American Veterans, the YMCA, the Heart Fund, Christmas Seals and the American Civil Liberties Union, took from several days to weeks to get their money in the bank. One, Temple University, took more than two months to deposit a check.

Almost as wasteful is some charities' practice of keeping large amounts of money in checking or low-interest bank accounts. The funds would be better invested in higher-interest savings accounts or short-term government bonds.

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